

Revelation 6

1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

Here John sees the Lord Jesus Christ (the Lamb), who alone was worthy, opening the first of the seven seals. Six of the seven seals are opened in this chapter, and each one describes increasing levels of tribulation for the world. We will not see the seventh seal opened until chapter 8. With regards to those mentioned in this chapter, there is an obvious comparison with Matthew 24, which deals with the same period. Note the following parallels: False Christs/Antichrist (Matthew 24:4-5; Revelation 6:1-2); Wars and rumours of wars/the sword (Matthew 24:6; Revelation 6:3-4); Famines and inflation (Matthew 24:7; Revelation 6:5-6); earthquakes (Matthew 24:7; Revelation 6:12-14).

As each of the seals is broken and that part of the scroll unrolled, one of the cherubim summon one of the four horses and its rider to begin fulfilling the prophecy. These four horsemen are usually known as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

The 1st Seal

John heard what sounded like a thunderclap behind him as this seal was opened. One of the living creatures invited him to take a closer look. This was so he could have a deeper understanding of the significance of the breaking of the first seal.

2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

He sees a rider on a white horse. Some believe that this depicts Christ, but in fact it is symbolic of the Antichrist (see Daniel 9:26).

Daniel 9:26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

Some point to the fact that Jesus will ride a white horse in Revelation 19:11:

Revelation 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

It is very clear that the scenarios are completely different, especially since Jesus returns at the end of the tribulation period.

Notice that he has a bow without any arrows. Most Bible-believing commentators suggest that this represents a false peace. It is possible that his kingdom will be set up without warfare since peace isn't removed from the earth until the next seal is broken. The Antichrist will conquer the world through false peace and maybe broker a treaty with Israel, without the need for weapons. Why? The world will think he is Christ – the Messiah. This begins the Tribulation (Daniel 9:24-27).

Daniel 9:24-27 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant

with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

This horseman will be given a crown, so it is probable that his peaceful approach will win the affection of the world and they will willingly accept his leadership. World dominance is the aim of the Antichrist (see Revelation 13). Any hope that they have found the answer to the world's problems is premature, for whatever peace the Antichrist brings will be short-lived. This thought ties in with 1 Thessalonians 5:3 exactly.

1 Thessalonians 5:3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

We live in a time of national and international upheaval, so the world would love someone to appear on the world scene to offer peace and safety. It is the restraining influence of Biblical Christianity that inhibits the Antichrist appearing now, but once the Church is Raptured this restraint will be removed (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until

he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Whatever power he has will ultimately be given to him by Satan (Revelation 11:7; 13:7).

Revelation 11:7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

Revelation 13:7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

The 2nd Seal

The second living creature asked John to watch as Christ broke the second seal.

4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

John see a vision of a rider on a red horse, which symbolises bloodshed and war. This rider was sent to remove any vesture of peace from the earth. The peace brought about by the first rider

will quickly fade away as soon after he takes power. Even so, what this rider brings is only the beginning of what the world will have to endure (Matthew 24:8; Mark 13:7-8; Luke 21:9).

Matthew 24:8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Mark 13:7-8 And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

Luke 21:9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.

Terrible wars will take place during this period. Men will be demonically inspired to kill one another. The “Great Sword” may point to the ultimate weapon of mass destruction. The earth will likely come to the brink of all-out nuclear war at this time. The sword may have something to do with Islam too, for wherever the religion goes unrest, violence and war follow. One of the major emblems of Islam is the sword. It is entirely possible that Islamic states, such as Iran with its nuclear facilities, will play a part in the removal of peace. It should be mentioned that Islam, though being antichrist in spirit, is not the Antichrist system spoken of in Scripture.

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

The 3rd Seal

The third living creature called John to see the vision relating to the breaking of the third seal. In this vision he see a black horse and its rider holding a pair of scales. Famine usually follows war, but

after this world war, this famine will be the worst that has ever been experienced. This will cause rationing to be introduced, and as part of the process, the Mark of the Beast implemented (see Revelation 13). If we line up the events predicted in Revelation, we will find it is at this time the two witnesses will be proclaiming that these judgements are sent by God (Revelation 11:3-6).

Revelation 11:3-6 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

The owner of the “voice” is not mentioned, but because the one speaking is in “the midst of the four beasts”, it is likely to belong to the Lord.

The “penny” or “denarius” was the daily wage of a labourer. This symbolises the great famine mentioned above, it will cover the whole earth during the Antichrist years (compare Lamentations 4:8-9).

Lamentations 4:8-9 Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick. They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field.

Not only food shortage, but also water and probably economic disaster. All commodities will be extremely expensive. The days of prosperity and plenty will end. Many things we take for granted will be luxuries then. Few will be able to afford their basic needs. With famine comes starvation and death as we shall see.

Notice that oil is mentioned. This could refer to the fact that oil and fuel prices will skyrocket. It is interesting that the Middle East, especially Islamic countries, supplies most of the oil to the world. If the Antichrist is able to control and cut this supply, we can see just how devastating it would be to the economy of the world.

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

The 4th Seal

The fourth living creature calls upon John to see the breaking of the fourth seal and the corresponding vision.

8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

John sees a pale, yellowish-green horse. The rider of this horse is named "Death", which is reflected by the corpse-like colour. The three preceding judgements produce this death. It seems that this judgement adds yet another level of severe plaques on earth. This vision describes yet another great war and a famine. It will not be a world war since it only affects one quarter of the earth's population. It is likely to be located in one place, maybe within Europe.

The consequence of Death is Hell. It is said that death claims the body, and Hell claims the soul. Wild animals play their part in killing humans. "Beasts of the earth" makes it literal rather than symbolic.

It is possible that the animals become demonically possessed, thus becoming wild. The death toll will reach to between 1.5 to 2 billion people.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

The 5th Seal

There is no mention of any angel calling John to view the breaking of this fifth seal. As the Lord Jesus Christ opens the seal John saw under the heavenly altar. There he saw the souls of the millions who are being martyred for the cause of Christ during the first three and half years of the Tribulation. These are described as being faithful. Not even the threat and fear of death could keep them from following the Lord. It appears that there is a conscious intermediate state for these people as they await the time when they will be united with their bodies.

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth

These people desired to know when the Lord would judge the earth for the wickedness its inhabitants had shown towards Christ's followers. Being conscious, rather than in a state of soul-sleep (an heretical doctrine), they are fully aware of what is taking place both in Heaven and in earth. They also understand something of time. Those who persecute and kill believers think they have got away with it, but the judgement is coming! What a terrible punishment theirs will be!

11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

Notice that they have the white robes of the righteousness of Christ and because they are overcomers. The fact that they can wear robes in a purely spiritual state suggests that spirits are as tangible in the Heavenly dimension as our physical bodies are in ours.

They are encouraged to wait a little longer. Why? Because many more will be added to their number before the end has come. When the very last Christian martyr has paid the price then the Lord will pour out His wrath upon the world (see Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19).

Deuteronomy 32:35 To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.

Romans 12:19 Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

The 6th Seal

The Lord opens the sixth seal. Instantly a great earthquake rocks the earth (Matthew 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11).

Matthew 24:7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes, in divers places.

Mark 13:8 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

Luke 21:11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

This earthquake may activate dormant volcanoes as it fractures the earth's faults. This will cause many devastating and catastrophic disasters worldwide.

Volcanic activity on such a grand scale may be the reason why the sunlight is blocked – the ash fills the air and sky so that the sun cannot be seen (see Isaiah 13:9-10; Joel 2:31; Zephaniah 1:15).

Isaiah 13:9-10 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

Joel 2:31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Zephaniah 1:15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.

It is also possible that there will be a disturbance of the sun and moon as the sixth seal is broken. Thick darkness can obviously be a direct act of God – remember that this happened in Egypt in the days of Moses. Some suggest that these events could be caused by a powerful nuclear explosion, but it is probably better to allow the text to speak for itself and accept that God triggers the great earthquake Himself. The Greek word for “earthquake” is “seismos” meaning a great shaking (Isaiah 2:19-21; 13:13; Haggai 2:6).

Isaiah 2:19-21 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the

ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

Isaiah 13:13 Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.

Haggai 2:6 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land.

13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

Many stars will fall upon the earth. These could be a swarm of meteorites or asteroids, though the Greek word *aster* seems to indicate the latter. Once again, while some see the “stars” as man-made satellites and the debris left up in space falling back to Earth, it is best not to read modern explanations into the prophecy. “Untimely figs” refers to the fact that this event will come suddenly and totally unexpected. There will be no news reports warning of this eventuality. It is obvious that there will be an increase of cosmic disturbances during the Great Tribulation.

14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

Devastating climatic changes result. To John it appeared as though the sky was being rolled up like a scroll (Isaiah 34:4).

Isaiah 34:4 And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.

This is the result of whatever hits the earth, and it seems that the sky will disappear for a while. No wonder there will be great fear.

Mountains will be moved and islands will alter their positions in the seas. It is certain that there will be great devastation throughout the earth as its tectonic plates are moved and the landscape changes rapidly.

15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

Everyone, regardless of status, will be in fear and totally panic stricken as these horrendous events take place. They will try to hide in shelters, dens and caves to protect themselves from what is happening (Isaiah 2:19).

Isaiah 2:19 *And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.*

There is no escape from what is taking place, for no shelter will hide them from the devastation. Maybe caves and mountains are not the best security since the earthquake is going to cause such upheaval!

16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

They will be so afraid that they will go mad with fear. To die would be better than this! They pray that the tottering mountains would fall on them. The amazing thing is that they know that God is behind all of this! Almost everyone at this time will be a believer in God. They will know that there is only one true God who sits on the Throne of Heaven. They will know that the Lord Jesus Christ is the true Messiah, that is, the one who died on the cross for their sins, but they never actually repent. Those who have taken the “mark” obviously cannot.

17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

They had heard that there was a coming judgement (and the end of the world), but they had dismissed it and mocked those who spoke of such things. They had refused to accept that God would punish them for their sins, but now they know that such a day of judgement has arrived (Joel 1:15; Amos 5:18).

Joel 1:15 *Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.*

Amos 5:18 *Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.*

Everything that preachers of the Gospel had said was coming to pass. They realise this too late, and what they are experiencing at this point is only the initial phase of the judgements that will be unleashed.

The events spoken of in this chapter cannot take place before the Rapture of the Church, therefore they will be the experience of those living through the Great Tribulation, otherwise, the Rapture cannot be much of a Blessed Hope (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9; Titus 2:13).

1 Thessalonians 1:10 *And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.*

1 Thessalonians 5:9 *For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Titus 2:13 *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*